

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUCAR 03495 132150Z
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INFO USIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION BERLIN
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 3495

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT RO
SUBJECT: ROMANIA CELEBRATES ITS CENTENNIAL

1. SUMMARY. ROMANIAN CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION MAY 9 WAS A SURPRISINGLY LOW KEY, NON-POLEMICAL EVENT WHICH PROBABLY DISAPPOINTED MAJORITY OF ROMANIANS BUT WHICH ACCORDS WITH CEAUSESCU'S DESIRE FOR SMOOTHER RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION AND WARSAW PACT ALLIES. END SUMMARY.

2. WHAT ROMANIANS WERE LED TO EXPECT. ONE YEAR, OR EVEN
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PAGE 02 BUCAR 03495 132150Z

SIX MONTHS AGO, CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION WAS EXPECTED TO BE A MAJOR OR EVEN CRUCIAL EVENT. INTER ALIA, IT WAS TO INCLUDE TRIUMPHAL END OF "HYMN TO ROMANIA" FESTIVAL, LAUNCHING OF LARGEST ROMANIAN MERCHANT VESSEL (NAMED "INDEPENDENCE"), AND DEDICATION OF A SPECIAL MONUMENT IN BUCHAREST. HISTORICAL JOURNALS BEGAN TO DISCUSS SUCH USUALLY UNMENTIONABLE SUBJECTS

AS BESSARABIA, PARTICIPATION IN 1877-78 RUSSO-TURKISH WAR OF THREE COUNTIES IN SOUTHERN BESSARABIA, RECOGNITION OF IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED MONARCHY IN ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE, AND RUSSIAN ACCEPTANCE OF OBLIGATION AT LIVADIA TO GUARANTEE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES IN RETURN FOR PERMISSION TO CROSS AREA ON WAY TO BULGARIA. ADDITIONALLY, ROMANIANS EXPECTED A TRULY IMPRESSIVE CELEBRATION, INCLUDING POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW AND PERMANENT MAY 9 HOLIDAY.

3. WHAT THEY GOT. BUILD-UP FOR CENTENNIAL LOST MOMENTUM IN LAST MONTH OR TWO OF 1976 AND NEVER RECOVERED. THIS PERIOD ALSO COINCIDES WITH BREZHNEV VISIT AND HEIGHT OF ROMANIAN "RAPPROACHEMENT" WITH SOVIET UNION. ARTICLES IN PRESS, HISTORICAL JOURNALS, AND CULTURAL PUBLICATIONS BEGAN TO SHY AWAY FROM SENSITIVE SUBJECTS, WHILE ACHIEVEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE BEGAN TO LOSE ITS EMPHASIS AS AN EVENT OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE AS OTHER EVENTS, (E.G. 1907 PEASANT REVOLT) RECEIVED ESSENTIALLY EQUAL BILLING. INDEPENDENCE CAME TO BE TREATED AS ONLY ONE ITEM IN A CHAIN INCLUDING THE 1859 UNION OF THE PRINCIPALITIES, FORMATION OF "GREATER ROMANIA" IN 1918 (BUT WITH LITTLE MENTION OF BESSARABIA), AND ABOVE ALL ELSE THE FOUNDING AND EVENTUAL TRIUMPH OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST PARTY.

4. ON MAY 9, THERE WAS NO "HYMN TO ROMANIA" FINAL PERFORMANCE, NO LAUNCHING OF THE "INDEPENDENCE," NO
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PAGE 03 BUCAR 03495 132150Z

MONUMENT, NO PARADE, AND NO HOLIDAY. IMMEDIATE PRE-CENTENNIAL SCHEDULE FEATURED ONLY SOME MINOR CULTURAL EVENTS, AN HISTORICAL SEMINAR (CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC), AND WREATH LAYINGS. MEDIA AND ACADEMIC JOURNALS STRESSED "BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN ROMANIAN, RUSSIAN AND OTHER BALKAN ARMIES" (E.G. SCINTEIA MAY 3, ERA SOCIALISTA EARLY MAY). DAY ITSELF CONTAINED ONLY TWO MAJOR EVENTS, A FIVE-HOUR JOINT SESSION OF RCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN MORNING AND A "FESTIVE PERFORMANCE" IN EVENING, THEMES OF WHICH HAD ONLY MARGINAL RELATIONSHIP TO CENTENNIAL. CEAUSESCU SPEECH AT FORMER (ASSUME FBIS HAS TEXT) CONTAINED NOTHING NEW OR DRAMATIC, ON AN OCCASION WHICH SEEMED TO DEMAND SOMETHING MORE THAN STANDARD RHETORIC. PRINCIPAL THEMES WERE HISTORICAL FORMATION OF ROMANIAN PEOPLE, REFUSAL OF ROMANIANS TO BOW DOWN TO ANYONE OVER THE CENTURIES, EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN CULTURAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES, AND GLORIOUS NEW ERA OPENED WITH ASCENSION OF RCP TO POWER. FEW FOREIGN DELEGATIONS

WERE IN EVIDENCE, OF WHICH MOST PROMINENT WERE A PRC PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION AND A PLO GROUP. NOR DOES "CENTENNIAL PROCLAMATION" ISSUED ON THIS OCCASION CONTAIN ANYTHING NEW OR INTERESTING.

5. COMMENT: LOW-KEY CELEBRATION OF CENTENNIAL CLEARLY DID NOT FULFILL PREVIOUS EXPECTATIONS AND FELL RATHER FLAT. THERE WAS NO EXCITEMENT, LITTLE PAGEANTRY, AND SEEMINGLY LITTLE POPULAR ENTHUSIASM OR PARTICIPATION IN THE EVENTS AS STAGED. IN SHORT, A TAILOR-MADE OCCASION TO INTENSIFY SENSE OF ROMANIAN NATIONAL PRIDE AND UNITY WAS SURPRISINGLY NOT EXPLOITED TO FULLEST. WHILE MARCH 4 EARTHQUAKE MAY HAVE BEEN FACTOR, STILL IN PAST CEAUSESCU HAS NOT BEEN RELUCTANT TO UTILIZE ANY AND ALL OCCASIONS TO FULLEST IRRESPECTIVE OF ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES. NO NATION, AND PARTICULARLY SOVIETS, COULD HAVE TAKEN OFFENSE AT WHAT WAS SAID AND DONE DURING CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BUCAR 03495 132150Z

ALTHOUGH CEAUSESCU DID NOT BACK DOWN ON ANY SUBSTANTIVE POLICY POSITION EITHER, (E.G. SCINTEIA PUBLISHED PRC CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE WHICH PRAISED ROMANIAN STRUGGLE AGAINST "HEGEMONISM"). POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS WERE SIMPLY IGNORED. WE WOULD NOT HAVE EXPECTED THIS OUTCOME A YEAR AGO. REASONING BEHIND THIS APPROACH PROBABLY HAS MORE TO DO WITH CEAUSESCU'S DESIRE NOT ROCK BOAT ON RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS IN THIS PRE-BELGRADE PERIOD THAN TO ANY COOLING IN HIS OR POPULACE'S SENSE OF VIBRANT NATIONALISM. BARNES

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